BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

J.M.E. McTAGGART'S CRITIQUE OF THE IDEA OF GOD

Submitted by

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(A.B., Boston University, 1928)

In partial fulfilment of requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

1930

OUTLINE

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I. Introduction.

A. Scope of thesis.

The subject of this thesis is J.M.E. McTaggart's critique of the idea of God. The purpose of the writer is to present a descriptive and critical study of that critique. It should be understood that this thesis is not intended to be a treatment either of McTaggart's complete philosophy of religion or of his metaphysical system as a whole.[1] Since McTaggart is to be studied as a critic of a single hypothesis rather than as an exponent of a systematic philosophy, it is not antecedently necessary to examine the validity of his metaphysical system. Due attention will be given, however, to the relation of certain phases of his treatment of the idea of God to his positive metaphysical views. Whatever defense of the theistic hypothesis may be made by the writer is intended to be not a complete putting of the case for theism, but only a statement of what may be said for theism as against McTaggart's critique of it.

B. Sources for thesis.

The principal sources for this study are <u>Some Dogmas of Religion</u> and <u>The Nature of Existence</u>.[2] The former of these works presents the more thorough and extensive treatment of the idea of God. The latter work

though published considerably later, does not diverge fundamentally from the position taken in Some Dogmas of Religion. Less important sources and bibliographical materials may be found in the bibliography appended to this thesis.[3]

C. Method of presentation.

In the presentation of material, no attempt will be made to follow McTaggart's order. The discussion will take into account the definition of God, the internal consistency of the idea of God, the arguments for the existence of God, and external criticisms of the idea of God. In that way, the principal points of view from which McTaggart criticizes the idea of God will be presented.

Perhaps the tone of the subsequent discussion will be appreciated better if it be understood that McTaggart is a personal idealist[4] and that the writer of the thesis entertains a personalistic bias. McTaggart holds that all reality is timeless and spiritual. The Absolute is differentiated into individual selves which are its fundamental and eternal constituents. All the content of the Absolute falls within these selves. Together they form a unified and harmonious system, which is governed by a principle of infinitely regressive determining correspondence. This system is the untimate and unexplainable fact of existence. Reality is spiritual, but not a spirit. Its unity is given, not externally derived.

II. The critique of the idea of God.

A. Definition of God: God is personal, supreme, and good.

God is defined by McTaggart as "a being who is personal, supreme, and good."[5] To call God personal is to ascribe to him the quality of being a self. That God is supreme does not mean that he is omnipotent. Supremacy denotes the possession of power much greater than that of any other person. It means the power of God profoundly to affect by his volition all existence external to himself.[6] The goodness of God does not imply moral perfection on his part, but only a moral minimum of the predominance of goodness. God must be more good than evil.

1. This definition current in contemporary Western theology.

McTaggart asserts that the characteristics of personality, supremacy, and goodness are implied in the idea of God as it is to be found in the theology of the Western world at the present time.[7] He holds that popular usage agrees at this point with theology.

a. Personality.

He points out that personality seems always to be regarded as essential to the idea of God.[8] Only personality satisfies the religious demands of theism; it is paramount for the ordinary conception of God.[9] The term "God" sometimes has been used to designate an impersonal

reality. It is probable, however, that in those cases the word was intended to represent worthy substitutes for God. Some philosophers, Hegel and Spinoza, for instance, have used "God" to mean all that truly exists, provided that it has some kind of unity.[10] The objection to this usage is that while the totality of existence is commonly called the Absolute or the Universe, there is no name but God for a supreme and good person. It may be added that certain other philosophers abide by the theological use of the term. Furthermore, to define God as all that exists would make the question of the existence of God a trivial one to all except complete skeptics and extreme pluralists.[11] The important problem of the existence of God would then be replaced by the problem of the nature of God.

b. Supremacy.

According to McTaggart, the attribute of supremacy, but not of omnipotence, also is held to be essential to the idea of God. No person is called God who is not the supreme being in the universe, or at least one of a limited number of such beings.[12] Most theists, to be sure, would profess to believe in the omnipotence of God, but they would not mean it strictly. "To call God omnipotent is a piece of theological etiquette from which few theists seem capable of escaping."[13] As I shall show below,[14] McTaggart holds that the hypothesis of a non-

creative God who is one of a number of persons whose existence is as ultimate as his own is self-consistent. This view, however, seems to be inconsistent with a statement that McTaggart makes in another place. In a review of G.H. Howison's The Limits of Evolution, he says, "Ever since the spread of Christianity God has meant for the Western world, a person who is the sole self-existent being."[15] He implies that he accepts this notion as a part of his definition of God. There are several reasons, however, for believing that this seeming inconsistency is not very important: (1) the statement in the review appears only once in McTaggart's writings and at a time earlier than his consideration in Some Dogmas of Religion of the hypothesis of a non-creative God; (2) that hypothesis receives careful and fairly extensive treatment; and (3) the hypothesis represents the only idea of God that McTaggart believes is consistent. It is true that God is generally conceived to be the creator of the universe, but the hypothesis of a non-creative God does not do essential violence to the definition of God, though it may place in doubt the fact of God's supremacy.

c. Goodness.

McTaggart's position that the accepted definition of God requires the quality of goodness in God as sound. He says that most theists believe that God is

morally perfect. In that, surely, he is right, but I cannot agree with him that God need be only more good than evil. The demand for moral perfection in God is so general that McTaggart is not justified in omitting it from his definition. Even theists who deny God's omnipotence retain belief in his perfect goodness. God's volitions must be completely good from the formal point of view. But it may be, although he does not say so, that McTaggart means that God's material goodness must exceed the amount of objective evil that is produced by his actions. Many theists admit that the world that God has created contains much evil, but none holds that God's responsibility for the existence of evil is of such a nature as to impair his intrinsic goodness. McTaggart's motive for saying that God need not be perfectly good may have been that he wanted to make provision for his later conclusion that the only kind of God that could exist could not, because of his relations to other selves, be morally perfect.[16] If McTaggart's statement is to be interpreted from the material point of view, it is at least misleading, for he does not say that it must be so interpreted. If it is to be taken formally, it is incorrect. At any rate, he is right when he says that God must be good.

d. McTaggart's claim for definition true on the whole.

McTaggart's definition of God is substantially what he claims it to be, namely, the definition used in

Western theology. I think that McTaggart has probably underestimated the significance that theists in general attach to the doctrine of the omnipotence of God. Mere "theological etiquette" does not account for the nearly universal acceptance of that doctrine by those who believe in God. It seems to many thinkers to meet a fundamental demand of the religious consciousness. Although the omnipotence of God may be an inconsistent doctrine, its significance for the great majority of theistic thinkers must not be overlooked. As for the goodness of God, McTaggart errs seriously if he intends us to believe that the accepted definition of God does not imply God's moral perfection. Neither of these defects, however, is of such a nature as to obscure the critical points in McTaggart's discussion of the doctrine of theism.

e. Use of theists' definition clarifies McTaggart's discussion.

In fact, one of the chief virtues of McTaggart's treatment of the idea of God is his use of the definition stated above. Although he is an atheist, McTaggart bases his handling of the idea of God on a definition that is recognized by theists. This method enhances the clarity of the discussion and prevents the missing of the vital points at issue between atheism and theism. Many humanists and popular critics of theism might well copy McTaggart's example of choosing an accepted definition of God and then frankly

announcing whether he accepts the doctrine of the existence of such a being as the one defined. Arbitrarily novel uses of the term "God" tend to confuse thought on this important problem.

2. McTaggart justifies acceptance of his definition.

It is on the fact of the need for clarity and common understanding in discussions about the idea of God that McTaggart bases his justification of the use of this definition which he says is that of modern Western theology. He says that the balance of convenience is in favor of the usage that he urges. He holds that if certain philosophers do not prefer this usage, philosophy ought to give way here to theology and popular practice.[17] McTaggart's demand is justifiable, especially in view of the fact that the theological definition is probably more widely accepted in philosophy than is any other.

B. Consistency of the idea of God.

McTaggart has defined God as personal, supreme, and good. Let us now see what he has to say about the consistency of the idea of God so defined. His discussion of this question takes the form of an examination to determine what degree of power may be ascribed to God in compatibility with his personality and his goodness. Is God omnipotent in the strict sense of the word? Has all other existent reality been created by God, or are there other beings whose

existence is as ultimate as God's? These two questions suggest three hypotheses: God may be (1) omnipotent and creative, (2) non-omnipotent and creative, or (3) non-omnipotent and non-creative.[18]

1. God as omnipotent and creative.

The theory that God is omnipotent and creative holds that all reality other than God has been created by him and is completely dependent on him.[19] God is not at all dependent on external reality; he has produced it by a purely self-determined act. The nature of his creation and the changes in it are due entirely to God's will, for there are no limitations on his will that can hinder its fulfilment.

There arise two objections to the idea of God as omnipotent and creative. The first objection is that omnipotence is incompatible with personality. The second objection is that omnipotence in a creative God is incompatible with goodness in a creative God.

a. Omnipotence incompatible with personality.

i. Conception of omnipotent will contradictory.

The first argument against the compatibility of omnipotence with personality is that the conception of an omnipotent will is contradictory.[20] The essence of the argument is that God must be limited by such laws as the laws of Identity, of Contradiction, and of Excluded Middle. In other words, God's actions must be limited to those

that fall within the bounds of rational possibility. His volitions could not be directed towards unreasonable ends, because the volitions of an omnipotent being would have to be realized. If God could not do unreasonable things, he could not be an omnipotent person. Therefore, since by definition God is a person, he cannot be omnipotent.

The validity of McTaggart's reasoning at this point depends on the validity of the proposition that only the rational can be real. If it was true that all reality must conform to rationality, no being could be omnipotent, for there would always be some things that each being could not do. No being, that is, could do a rationally impossible thing. It may be pointed out that the rationality that is meant here is not the rationality objective in all reality, the rationality that is the nature of all reality, but the rationality of normal human minds. The question is, Must all reality conform to the categories under which certain parts of reality subsume all their experiences? What reason is there for saying that all reality must meet human ideals of rationality? Why must God be bound by laws of human logic? The skeptic will say that neither God nor reality as a whole need conform to human rationality. It must be said, however, that such an objection to McTaggart's argument could be raised consistently only by one who was so completely skeptical that he would have no right to make any assertions of any

metaphysical significance. The validity of the laws of human logic is the necessary presupposition of all metaphysical discussion. This skeptical objection aside, McTaggart's first argument against the compatibility of omnipotence with personality must be acknowledged to be valid.

ii. Self-consciousness and other-consciousness.

McTaggart's second argument against the compatibility of omnipotence with personality is based on the contention that an omnipotent person must be able to exist without the existence of any other being.[21] The consciousness of an Other seems to be involved in that awareness of self that constitutes personality. Human personality is never found to exist without the recognition of the existence of something other than itself. An omnipotent being, however, would have to be capable of existing without this limitation; he would have to be capable of existing without that which seems to be essential to personality. Therefore an omnipotent being could not be God, God being, by definition, a person.

McTaggart does not present this argument as a logically conclusive one.[22] He admits that self-consciousness is not the same as other-consciousness and that we have no right to assert that they must be found together. He holds,

nevertheless, that it is unwise to build on the "abstract possibility" that a being could exist who could have self-consciousness without other-consciousness. As McTaggart admits, the argument is weak, if not quite invalid. McTaggart ought not, however, to question the wisdom of accepting the hypothesis of self-consciousness without other-consciousness on the ground of the abstractness of the possibility of its truth. Abstract possibilities cannot arbitrarily be barred from metaphysical discussion.

b. Omnipotence is incompatible with goodness.

The second objection to the idea of God as omnipotent and creative is, as I have said, that omnipotence in a creative God is incompatible with goodness in a creative God.[23] If God is the omnipotent creator of all beings other than himself, he must be conceived as the creator of all the evil that exists in the world. Even the volitions of free human beings are admitted to be dependent ultimately on the will of God.[24] If God is omnipotent, he could have prevented the existence of evil. If he could have prevented evil and did not, he himself is evil. Therefore an omnipotent creator cannot be God, for God, by definition, must be good.

McTaggart has here brought out a fundamental objection to the doctrine of the omnipotence of God, if God be conceived as good. If, as McTaggart says, a man fails to prevent evil when he has the power to do so, we

say that he is evil. The same must be said of an omnipotent creator who fails to prevent the creation of such an evil world as this. The only excuse for such an act would be the existence of limitations on the power of the agent. Such limitations, however, could not be said to exist in the case of an omnipotent creator. A good and creative God cannot be omnipotent.

i. Attempted rebuttals rejected.

Attempts to save the omnipotence of God by questioning the validity of man's judgment of the reality of evil in the universe and asserting that the universe when viewed properly may be completely good meet with no sympathy on McTaggart's part.

(A) Pain and sin really good?

He says that the view that pain and sin really are good though we think them evil involves complete ethical skepticism.[25] We would have no right to predicate of anything that it was good. Hence we would be unable to justify belief in God, whose definition includes goodness. This argument cannot be used consistently by believers in an omnipotent God. McTaggart's objection to this argument does not imply that all pain is completely valueless. He simply holds that whatever value it may have, it cannot be perfectly good.

(B) Pain and sin do not exist?

McTaggart also rejects the view that our belief that pain and sin exist is a delusion.[26] He says that it is a fact that we at least think that evil exists. Is it not, then, an evil that we should suffer this delusion? Is it not an evil that we should have the truth about reality hidden from us in this way? If it is a delusion that we are deluded, is not that delusion in turn an evil, and so on ad infinitum? We must hold that evil exists. McTaggart is right in holding that some evil must exist, but there may be some question as to whether the evil of our being deluded about reality is as great an evil as would be the existence of all the evil that we ordinarily suppose to exist.

(C) God's goodness different from finite human goodness?

The attempt made by Pascal and Mansel to defend the compatibility of goodness with omnipotence on the ground that goodness in God is different from goodness in man is rejected by McTaggart.[27] This view holds that God's infinite goodness is not to be measured in terms of the finite goodness of man. The goodness of God may be compatible with the existence of what our finite standards condemn as evil. McTaggart's objection is that this involves using "goodness" in contradictory senses. God's goodness would be wickedness to us. The only motive for calling him good would be to flatter him and avoid his disfavor. Such a course might be the lesser evil. Even so, we could not depend on such a being for truth or

(D) Call God good even though he is not?

Another line of defense is to call God good even though we believe that, strictly speaking, he is not.

(1) Evil arises from free will?

One form of this defense is the contention that sin arises from perversion of free will. Suffering is in some way the consequence of sin.[28] Thus evil is necessarily the consequence of the exercise of the freedom of human will. Free will is held to be of such great value that God was justified in choosing it even with all its consequences of evil. McTaggart replies with two objections: (a) the validity of this high evaluation of free will may be doubted, and (b) an omnipotent God could create a world in which men had freedom and where there was no evil.[29]

(2) Evil necessary in universe governed by universal laws?

The second form of this defense is that there is bound to be some evil in a universe governed in accordance with universal laws.[30] Such a government of the universe is so great a perfection that God was justified in choosing it in spite of the evil it involves. Similar objections are raised to this view: (a) the high evaluation of universal laws may be doubted, and (b) an omnipotent being could make laws that would exclude evil.

(3) Universe without evil would violate certain laws of logic?

The third form of this defense is that the existence of a universe in which there was no evil would violate such laws of logic as the Law of Contradiction or the Law of Excluded Middle.[31] McTaggart implies that there is no ground for believing that there is any necessity for choosing between these alternatives. He holds, moreover, that if God did have to conform to these laws, he would not be omnipotent.

ii. Omnipotence and goodness: conclusion re-stated.

McTaggart's conclusion, then, is that there is no good reason for his giving up his judgment that the fact of the existence of evil in the world means that the creator of the world cannot be both good and omnipotent. He holds that since God must be good, he cannot, if he is the creator of the world, be omnipotent.

c. McTaggart's use of "omnipotence" justified.

I see no reason why anybody should refuse to agree with McTaggart when he says that people who call God omnipotent and then say that there are things that he cannot do are simply using the wrong word.[32] Pringle-Pattison says that the chapter on God as omnipotent in Some Dogmas of Religion is, on the whole, rather fruitless because of McTaggart's taking omnipotence as implying the power to make contradictions true.[33] He protests that

those whom McTaggart criticizes do not use the word in that sense. McTaggart agrees, but holds that the term ought so to be used. McTaggart's insistence on this point is not trivial because, as he shows, confusion of thought arises from ambiguity in the application of the word.[34] If God is not actually omnipotent, the fact of his existence is not sufficient guarantee that the universe holds more good than evil. The precise limits of the power of a finite God could be determined only after elaborate metaphysical investigation. Therefore, to prove that the universe is predominantly good, people appeal to the doctrine of the omnipotence of God. This course of action is confusing if the term "omnipotence" is not used strictly. If God is not actually omnipotent in the strict sense of the term, the real problem is hidden behind an apparent verbal solution of it. If God is not omnipotent, he must not be called omnipotent.

d. Conclusion: God cannot be omnipotent.

The result of McTaggart's examination of the consistency of the idea of God as omnipotent and creative is his conclusion that God cannot be omnipotent. Omnipotence would be incompatible with God's goodness and with God's personality. The hypothesis is inconsistent.

2. God as non-omnipotent and creative: goodness and power.

We may now consider McTaggart's discussion of the consistency of the idea of God as non-omnipotent and creative. At the center of the discussion is the question of the power of God in relation to his goodness.[35] The denial of the omnipotence of God has not included denial of his creative power. Is that creativity compatible with God's goodness? If God has created the universe and it is found to contain evil, may we not yet save the goodness of God by ascribing the existence of evil to limitations on his power? The distinction between antecedent and consequent volition points to a possible solution on this basis. "We will antecedently that which we desire in all respects. We will consequently that which, under the circumstances, we prefer to any other alternative which the circumstances leave possible."[36] A person's antecedent volition may be thwarted by external circumstances, and he may be forced to will consequently what he would not freely choose. If his consequent volition produces evil, the person cannot be held morall responsible for the existence of the evil. Now, is it not possible that God wills antecedently the good, but he is forced by the limitation of his field of choice to will consequently what from the ideal point of view is evil?

a. External limitations on God's power impossible.

When a man wills to do a thing and cannot do it, his impotence is never due solely to his own nature, for he is dependent on reciprocal action between himself and the rest of the universe.[37] But in the case of a creative God, there could be no effective external limitations on his power to produce what he willed antecedently. In the beginning God would be the only existent reality. He could, therefore, suffer no limitations external to his own nature. The creator would be completely self-determined in the act of creation. If, then, he created evil, he would be evil.

b. Internal limitations meaningless.

The only other possibility is that of there being morally extenuating limitations within the nature of God. Such a suggestion is, according to McTaggart, meaningless.

> God endeavors to produce whatever he wills antecedently. The defeat of an antecedent volition means a defeated effort. And what I am unable to see is the possibility of explaining the defeat of the effort solely from the nature of the being who made it. He only acts by his will. And if his will is directed to a certain end, can there be anything in his nature which can hinder its execution?[37]

We ought not to hold to a division in the nature of God such that there would be a metaphysically incompatible opposition between the will of God and the law of his

nature.[38] The law of his nature is not a separate, external force, but a description of how he acts. It does not control his nature, but expresses it. The law of God's nature, then, cannot act on his will in such a way as to thwart it. God's nature and his will are in complete harmony. The insurmountable difficulty lies in the necessity of explaining how God's nature can "at once inpel him towards an end and yet be the sole obstacle to his realizing that end."[39] God's will and his power sometimes are taken almost as separate beings, the tendency to realize antecedent volitions being ascribed to the former and the failure to realize them completely being ascribed to the latter as limited in nature. This constitutes an unwarranted disruption of the personality of God by division into abstract qualities.[40]

c. McTaggart's conclusion: God cannot be creative.

Having denied the possibility of external limitations on a creative God, and having found meaningless the idea of internal limitations of such a nature as to excuse God's creating evil, McTaggart arrives at the conclusion that creativity in God would be incompatible with God's goodness. He therefore rejects the hypothesis of a non-omnipotent and creative God.[41]

d. Is McTaggart's conclusion valid?

McTaggart must be granted the point that there could be no external restraints on the power of a creative God. It must also be admitted that if there cannot be internal limitations on God's power, the doctrine of the creativity of God must be rejected. Since the possibility of such internal limitations may well finally determine whether the balance of thought will favor theism or atheism, it is desirable to examine more thoroughly the meaning and validity of McTaggart's argument on that question.

i. The case against internal limitations.

(A) God's nature and his will.

Is the relation between God's nature and his will such as to allow his nature to limit his power? Let us first examine the case for McTaggart's negative answer to this question. That the nature of any given being must be a specific nature is to be taken for granted. This means that there is a specific number of things that any particular person will, or can, ever do. No person wills what it is not in his nature to will. In fact, it is impossible to do so. But once a person has willed in accordance with his nature, he cannot at the same time not will the end towards which that volition is directed. There is no such thing as the existence simultaneously within the same person of contradictory volitions. The contradictions within human wills are never absolutely simultaneous: either they are rapidly consecutive

or else the will has not yet taken a final attitude towards the situation in which the contradictions arise. While a person entertains a given volition, his own will cannot at the same time be an obstacle in the way of the realization of the end of that volition. In such a case the volition will be realized if there are no external limitations on the power of the person. The person may cease to will what he has been willing, but if he does so, it is only because it is his nature for him to do so. He wills or does not will a thing in accordance with the laws of his own nature. The laws of his nature, however, are not forces external to his will, but are descriptive laws, descriptions of the ways in which he acts. The person acts only as will. At a given moment the will is the active expression of the entire nature of the person at that moment. The nature of the person at any other moment does not at that moment exist. To conceive the nature of the person as thwarting the person's will when once the will is directed towards an end is impossible: the nature of the will is to act as it does. That the will could thwart itself is inconceivable.

Now, if at a given moment a person is willing evil, the nature of that person is to some extent evil, for the nature of the person is simply descriptive of the quality of the will. This correspondence between the quality of the person's nature and the quality of his will exists

because the will always acts in accordance with the nature of the person. The creator must be completely self-determined in the act of creation, for in the beginning no other reality exists. If he wills the creation of an evil world, his evil will is simply the active expression of his evil nature. If God's will is evil and if his nature is evil, certainly it may be said that God is evil. If God wills a world that is partly evil, he is to that extent evil. Creativity is not compatible with God's goodness. Therefore God is not creative. Although McTaggart is not to be held responsible for the details of the foregoing interpretation, I believe that in general it is in harmony with his position.

(B) Obstructing experience within God?

Now, it might be asked, is it not possible that there might be within the being of God an element of experience present in his consciousness independently of his will, an element of experience somewhat analogous to sensation in man? This experience-content would be something against which the creator would have to struggle in order to realize his ideals. The necessity for struggling would constitute such a limitation on the creator's power as to account for his creation of evil and allow for his being called good.[42] If this hypothesis can be shown to be valid, it will remove the incompatibility between God's creativity and his goodness.

There is an objection to this view, however. All experience the creator has before he creates must be entirely self-originated. Hence any experience-obstacle present before the act of creation must have been produced by something within God. Any part of God's experience before creation must be, in order to have any effect on his actions, the result of his active nature. God's active nature is his will. Now, if the experience-obstacle is the effect of God's will, it cannot be an obstacle to God's will, for, as has been pointed out, the will of a person cannot thwart itself. It now appears to be true that there could not be in the experience of God any obstacle to the fulfilment of his will that had its origin in God's own being. It would seem that the creator's acts would be autonomous. If he created evil, he could not be God. Since the world contains both good and evil, the creator of it must be either morally neutral or else alternately good and bad according as he at different times creates good or evil. These alternatives, of course, are not applicable to God, for they are excluded by the definition of God.

ii. The case for internal limitations.

Now that the case against the hypothesis of internal limitations on God's power has been stated, let us review the question with the purpose of finding out whether a view more favorable to the hypothesis is justifiable.

With much of the content of the foregoing arguments I am in agreement. I cannot accept, however, their assumption that the hypothesis requires the hypostasization of the nature of God as a separate force acting upon, and opposing, the will of God. I fully agree with McTaggart that God's nature and his will must be in complete harmony, but I also hold that the principle is not violated by the hypothesis of internal limitations on God's power.

God's nature is revealed, or expressed, in his activity. All God's activity is basically volitional, that is, self-originated or self-determined. The relation between God's will and his nature is analogous to the relation of form and content. It is a relation of completely harmonious and organic unity, not a relation between two distinct forces or entities.

God's volitional activity is an organic unity that is differentiated into desires, reason-processes, purposes, intentions, conations, efficient activities, self-perceptions, and so forth. The differentiations within God's volitional activity are in harmony with one another; neither their serial not their simultaneous existence within the same being is contradictory. If an analogy be sought, let the human self be considered. There consciousness is at the same time both unified and diversified. To deny that differentiations could exist within

the being of God is equivalent to holding that God must be thought either under the category of indeterminateness or under the category of pure being. Either of these categories is quite inadequate to describe a being who is, by hypothesis, the creator of a universe so rich in content as is the universe we know. The first category cannot be applied to any existent being. The use of the second to describe God is at once made impossible when it is held that any of God's activity is immanent in a universe that is in any sense external to him.

Now, if God's volitional activity as a whole is in harmony with God's nature, and if there is harmony between the differentiations within God's volitional activity, it may be said that each of the differentiations is in harmony with God's nature. Each activity of God's will appears or emerges because it is God's nature for that activity to arise. God's nature is expressed not only in his volitional activity as a whole, but also in the various specific purposes, strivings, desires, self-perceptions, and so forth, that are to be found within his will.

Let us now suppose the appearance within the volitional activity of God of a desire for the realization of a certain value. This desire emerges because it is God's nature for it to emerge: there can be no contradiction between God's nature and the existence of the desire.

Now, we may suppose that, by virtue of a kind of order or rationality inherent in the nature of God, the appearance of the desire will be followed by the appearance of an activity directed towards the fulfilment of the desire. This activity must be determinate in its quality, its duration, and its effectiveness. Either the activity is adequate for the realization of the end towards which it is directed or it is inadequate for the realization of that end. If the activity is adequate, the end will be realized, for there can be no external limitations on the activity of the creator. The only qualification to this statement is that the existence of the end must not be rationally impossible. If the activity is not adequate, the end will not be realized.

Let it be assumed that the activity has been directed towards the production of A, but has failed to produce it. Now, it may be that the nature of God is such that there next appears in God an activity that produces the existence of B, an end whose existence would be incompatible with the existence of A. Does this situation mean that there is a real contradiction within God? No ultimate contradiction is involved. To be sure, the end A is the contradictory of the end B, and the existence of A would be incompatible with the existence of B. But according to our hypothesis, B is the only end that has been realized.

There_fore there is no real contradiction at this point. It may be admitted, also, that both the desire for A and the activity that starts to produce A are contradictory to the activity that produces B. The contradiction, however, is not an ontological incompatibility; it merely stands for a descriptive difference. Vicious opposition between various volitions can be thought only if they are taken in abstraction from the common nature with which they are in harmony and set up as active beings. But if all the volitions are referred to the nature which they express, contradiction disappears in the light of their ontological, as well as their descriptive harmony as merely serially distinct manifestations of the nature of a unified being.

On this hypothesis there is no strife between God's nature and his will; neither must God's will thwart itself. The failure of an antecedent volition to be realized does not represent a "defeated effort" of the will, but only an inadequate effort. The inadequacy of the effort does not represent a limitation imposed on the volition, but simply the determinateness of the volition. And all occurs in harmony with the nature of God.

But it still remains to be shown that this hypothesis would relieve God of moral responsibility for the creation of evil. If God acts only by his will, and if his activity sometimes produces evil results, is not God

evil? It is now necessary to point out that the arguments that have been advanced against the hypothesis of internal limitations that could save God's goodness have largely been motivated by belief in the false notion that all volitions must be approved by the willing being. There can be both desiderative and non-desiderative volition. I have defined volition as self-originated or self-determined activity. There is no reason for holding that every volition, or self-originated activity, must be caused by, or accompanied by a desire for it or an approval of it. According to the hypothesis that I have been developing, desires for good ends may exist in God simultaneously with actions that produce evil effects. Judged from the material point of view, God might be said to be evil. But to be wrong materially does not entail moral guilt. Judged from the formal point of view, God might be said to be evil only if he entertained evil intentions or desires. There is no antecedent objection to the hypothesis that all God's desires, purposes, and intentions would be good. If that was the case, God might be morally good in spite of the fact that certain actions of his caused the existence of evil.

iii. Conclusion: McTaggart's position is not valid.

The argument has been carried far enough to show that the hypothesis of internal limitations on God's power is compatible with the conception of the personality

of God. Furthermore, it has been shown that the existence of these limitations would relieve God of moral responsibility for the existence of evil. Therefore the conclusion is that McTaggart's rejection of the consistency of the idea of God as non-omnipotent and creative is not valid.

3. God as non-omnipotent and non-creative: consistent.

We now move to McTaggart's discussion of the consistency of the idea of God as non-omnipotent and non-creative.[43] According to this theory, God is just a person among persons. He is greater in power and goodness than the others, and is worthy of worship. His goodness consists in his trying to reduce evil to a minimum, but his success is uncertain. There is no antecedent impossibility in the existence of such a God as this. Persons do exist, and God may be simply one more person, different only quantitatively from the rest.

4. McTaggart's conclusion on consistency of the idea of God.

The outcome of McTaggart's examination of the question of the consistency of the idea of God is his rejection of the hypotheses of an omnipotent and creative God and of a non-omnipotent and creative God and his conclusion that there is no inconsistency in the hypothesis of a non-omnipotent and non-creative God.

His rejection of the first hypothesis is valid.

The two weak aspects of his treatment of it are the admittedly inconclusive argument from the necessity of other-consciousness and the rejection of the suggestion that the value of free will might be so great as to justify God's choosing to create free beings who would probably produce evil. Freedom of will is requisite to all morality. In minimizing the value of freedom, one minimizes the value of moral experience. But admission that God was justified in creating free beings would not destroy the argument against his omnipotence. In the first place, freedom would account for moral evil and only some non-moral evil. The remaining non-moral evil would have to be attributed to God. In the second place, as McTaggart holds, an omnipotent God could create free beings without evil consequences.[44]

I have already indicated my reasons for believing that McTaggart's argument against the second hypothesis cannot be accepted. There can be no disagreement with his conclusion that the third hypothesis is not inconsistent. Such disagreement would be equivalent to the view that the concept of personality is inconsistent. That that cannot be true is proved by the fact that persons exist. According to McTaggart, the only consistent theistic hypothesis is the idea of a non-omnipotent and non-creative God. From my point of view, there are two consistent theistic hypotheses, namely, the idea of a non-omnipotent and creative God and the idea of a non-omnipotent and non-creative God. Which one of the

two hypotheses must finally be accepted, if one of them must be accepted, will be determined by theoretical and empirical considerations to be discussed later.

C. Arguments for the existence of God.

1. Miscellaneous arguments.

Let us now turn to the arguments for the existence of God. McTaggart rejects as insufficient to establish the existence of any kind of God reasons supported only by appeal to instinctive and irresistible conviction of their truth. He also will not accept the validity of the basing of belief in the existence of God on miracles or on the argument that disastrous results would follow from the non-existence of a God.[45] He cites Kant's classification of the arguments for the existence of God as the ontological, the cosmological, and the physico-theological.[46] McTaggart believes the ontological argument to have been adequately disposed of by Kant and does not give it serious consideration.[47] He says that Kant's cosmological argument resembles very closely the argument from the necessity for a first cause. Kant's physico-theological argument is identified with the argument from design. Since the two latter arguments are in frequent use, McTaggart discusses their validity.

2. The argument from the necessity for a first cause.

a. For God as omnipotent and creative.

Let us first consider the argument from the

necessity for a first cause. McTaggart holds that the existence of an omnipotent and creative God cannot be proved by this argument. His statement of the argument is as follows.[48] Events continually occur in the world. Every event must have had a cause. Every cause is an event and thus must have had a cause. Existent non-divine substances cannot be said to be eternal. The beginning of each such substance is an event that requires a cause. In order to avoid an endless causal regress, it is necessary to postulate an ultimate cause that is not an event requiring a cause, but is a being who had no beginning and so needed no cause. This being is God.

i. First cause <u>versus</u> infinite causal regress.

(A) McTaggart's defense of infinite causal regress inconclusive.

The argument from the necessity for a first cause is presented as an alternative to an infinite regress of causes. Supporters of the argument hold that such a regress is impossible. McTaggart, however, disagrees: he holds that there is no ground to suppose that an infinite causal regress involves contradiction.[49] If McTaggart were right, the existence of a first cause would not be a necessary hypothesis. But when the ground for his statement is examined, it is revealed to be the acceptance of a view of causation that holds that an effect can determine its cause in just the same way in which the cause determines the effect.[50] McTaggart's view of causation is that it is a

transitive, reciprocal relation. He holds that an infinite causal regress would therefore not be vicious and might exist. This conclusion, however, is irrelevant, for the causation to which the argument from the necessity for a first cause refers is a non-reciprocal relation, representing a non-reciprocal activity. According to McTaggart, causation is "a relation of implication between existent realities..... or, to put it more precisely, between existent substances."[51] It does not account for the existence of those substances; it merely refers to their descriptive determination once thay are in existence. Since the argument from the necessity for a first cause refers to efficient causation, to say that McTaggart's view of causation is compatible with the idea of an infinite causal regress does not refute the argument. It still may be true that the idea of an infinite causal regress is self-refuting and that it supplies no ultimate cause for the substances in the causal series.

(B) Infinite causal regress is contradictory.

Since I know of no valid argument in support of the validity of the idea of an infinite causal regress, I may now proceed to set forth the reasons for believing that it is unsound. A causal regress can yield sufficient causation only if the earliest event in the series is determined.[52] But in an infinite causal regress there can be no earliest event, for the idea of an infinite causal

regress is based on recognition of the principle that every event must have been caused by an event earlier than itself. Since there can be no earliest event in an infinitely regressive series, such a series cannot be an adequate causal principle. The very law that is essential to the status of the infinite causal regress as an explanatory principle makes it impossible for it to provide ultimate causation. Infinite regress is not the realization of causation; it is only the search for it.

ii. Existence of first cause cannot be proved.

McTaggart holds, nevertheless, that even if an endless regress of causes is impossible, the position that a first cause can exist is untenable.[53] The argument for God as a first cause conceives God's existence as having no beginning in time. This means either that God exists in time and has always existed in time or that his existence is timeless, hence not requiring any beginning.

(A) Objections to argument on assumption that God exists in time.

In the first case, if God has existed through infinite past time without being caused, why may not other substances have done so too? "I cannot see why it should be said, of three substances existing in time, that God did not need a creator, but that a man and a pebble did."[54] The question that McTaggart raises here points to a fundamental defect in the argument for the necessity for a first

cause as he has stated it. The argument depends on the same law of causality as does the idea of an infinite causal regress. According to that law, every event must have been determined by a previous event or cause. To stop at any point in the causal regress after having been led there by acceptance of the causal law is an arbitrary violation of that law. If it is true that every event or substance must have had a previous cause, then God, as well as men or pebbles, must have had aprevious cause. In that case God would not be the first cause. The causal principle on which the argument for a first cause is based can lead logically not to a first cause, but only to an infinite causal regress.

McTaggart, still on the hypothesis of God's existence in time, raises another equally valid objection to the argument from the necessity for a first cause. He says that in order to avoid the conclusion that there is an infinite regress of causes (acts of volition are events and require causes) within the mind of God, we must suppose that God exists as the cause of changes without himself changing. In that case the cause would first exist without producing the effect, and would subsequently produce it. This change in the action of the cause would be an event that would have occurred without a cause. This would constitute a violation of the law of causality.[55]

(B) Objections on assumption of timelessness of God's existence.

In regard to the second alternative, namely, the timelessness of God's nature, McTaggart says that the difficulty of ascribing an event to a cause that is unchanging again confronts us, for a timeless be_ing is one that does not change.[56] Furthermore, if, to avoid this difficulty, it is held that the non-divine substances have existed through all past time, it must be acknowledged that they never commenced to exist, and hence require no creator.[57] These two objections seem to me to be sound.

The same cannot be said for McTaggart's criticism of a suggested solution of the problem raised by the assumption of the timelessness of God's nature. It is best to quote McTaggart because of the difficulty of paraphrasing his ambiguous statement.[57]

> It has been suggested that the series of events in time will appear, to a timeless being, as a timeless reality, and may thus be due to an eternal and unchanging volition of that being. But if the true nature of what appears as temporal is timeless, it is not really a series of events, and therefore the law of Causality does not apply to it. It needs a cause no more than God himself. And thus the argument breaks down.

It is true that if the true nature of what appears to us as temporal were really timeless, the law of causality would not apply to it. But the hypothesis set forth in the suggestion that McTaggart is answering is that what appears to God as timeless and to us as temporal really

is temporal. Therefore it is a series of events, to which the law of causality may be applied. McTaggart's criticism is quite beside the point. A better answer to the suggestion would be that it does not relieve us of the necessity for holding that a timeless cause would have to cause changes without changing. McTaggart himself has pointed out the difficulties involved in such a position. The suggested solution succeeds in eliminating the infinite regress within the mind of God, but it gives us no new light on the question of how a changeless being can cause changes.

(C) First cause and belief in human freedom.

McTaggart includes in his treatment of the argument from the necessity for a first cause an objection intended to apply to believers in human free will. His view is that the argument cannot be accepted consistently by one who believes in human freedom. The law of causality is not valid if human volition is not completely determined. If that law is not universally valid, the argument has no force.[58]

b. For God as non-omnipotent.

McTaggart holds that the argument from the necessity for a first cause could not be used to prove the existence of a non-omnipotent God, because the considerations already advanced against it as applied to an

omnipotent God do not depend on the omnipotence of the first cause.[59] There would be special objections, he holds, in the case of a non-omnipotent God who was non-creative. In the first place, a non-creative God would not be a first cause.[60] In the second place, the hypothesis of a non-creative God implies that non-divine substances could exist eternally and in their own right. Hence their existence would not imply the existence of a creator.[61] Furthermore, the existence of God as the cause of events would not be necessary, for any one of the eternal non-divine substances could serve as the cause of events. This completes McTaggart's refutation of the argument for the existence of God from the necessity for a first cause.

c. The argument could not prove personal and good cause exists.

Up to this point the discussion of the argument for the existence of God from the necessity for a first cause has really dealt only with the argument for the necessity for a first cause. McTaggart rightly points out that even if this first section of the argument were valid, it could not prove the existence of God, for God must be personal and good. The argument could prove only that there was a being who was a first cause; it could not show that that being was either personal or good. In order to demonstrate the existence of God, the argument from the necessity for a first cause would have to be supplemented

by the argument from design.[62] Whatever else may have been said for or against the argument, McTaggart's final objection is quite conclusive. To prove that a man must have had parents is not to prove that his parents were either very good or very intelligent. Likewise, to prove simply that the world must have had a cause is not to prove either that the cause was good or that it was intelligent. Such a conclusion might be forced upon us by other arguments, but not by the argument from the necessity for a first cause alone.

d. Defects of the argument's causal principle.

It should be made clear that McTaggart's refutation of the argument is a refutation only of the particular argument that he has stated.[63] It does not preclude the possibility of there being valid causal arguments for the existence of God that do not depend on the same causal principle as that on which the argument that has been discussed is based. I do not believe that there is any completely adequate causal argument for the existence of God, but it seems to me that there might be constructed a causal argument that would carry us much nearer the conclusion that God exists than does the argument that has just been rejected. The fatal defect of that argument is not one that is necessarily common to all causal arguments. It lies, as I have shown, in the acceptance of the particular causal law on which the argument is based.[64]

That law is at best an abstract and unproved hypothesis. It is only a descriptive principle arrived at by observation of the sequence of events in the phenomenal world. It is an inductive generalization having no necessary metaphysical validity as an explanation of ultimate causes. Furthermore, it depends on the false assumption that all apparent reality can be satisfactorily analyzed into discrete events. It disregards the fact that analysis is not an adequate method for the true description of the fluid character of either biological or mental life. The causal law to which our discussion has reference is also defective in that it ascribes to physical things a spurious individuality. There is no true individuality in material objects; that quality is to be found in personality alone. If material objects are treated as units in the causal series and if their various modes are treated as discrete events, it must be remembered that such a procedure is purely artificial and does not provide any real individuality on which can be based a causal principle that is valid for all reality. The causal law under discussion is purely abstract and merely descriptive of the sequence of phenomena many of which have no real individuality.

These defects do not inhere in all causal principles.[65] A valid causal argument might possibly be developed on the principle that the existence of every being

must have an adequate metaphysical ground. If any being was not the ground of his own existence, an external cause would have to be sought. Empirical demonstration that human selves could not be the grounds of their own existences would at least create a presumption in favor of the necessity for a creative God.

e. Refutation of argument not refutation of hypothesis of the existence of a first cause.

It ought to be understood, before we leave McTaggart's treatment of the argument from the necessity for a first cause, that his refutation of that argument does not destroy the hypothesis of God's existence as the first cause. At one point McTaggart's language seems to imply that the hypothesis is untenable. He says that "the hypothesis of a first cause involves us in hopeless difficulties."[66] Taken in its context, however, this statement means that the hypothesis is untenable as established by the argument from the necessity for a first cause that has been considered above. It is not a critcism of the hypothesis as such. In another place McTaggart says that there does not "seem any reason why we should reject as impossible a causal series with an uncaused beginning."[67] Such a series, I suppose, would not depend on the causal law that is at the basis of the argument that McTaggart has rejected. McTaggart's openmindedness towards the possibility of the existence of God as first

cause is further revealed by a statement of his that if time were real, "it might then be difficult to prove that there was not a creative God."[67] It is to be regretted that McTaggart does not tell us just what considerations would make it so difficult to prove the non-existence of a creative God. Even though the direct argument for the existence of God as first cause is shown to be false, the idea of the existence of God as first cause may still be appealed to as an hypothesis and not as the product of the argument.

3. The argument from design.

a. The argument stated.

Let us now consider McTaggart's presentation of the proof of the existence of God by the argument from design. This argument is set forth in Some Dogmas of Religion in a quotation from Kant's Critique of Pure Reason.[68] The quotation is a statement of the argument that Kant classifies as the physico-theological. It includes the following points: (1) the world, a whole of great variety in content and infinite in extent, bears signs of wise and purposive arrangement; (2) the various things in the world would never have combined in such cooperation towards definite ends if they had not been selected and directed by a rational disposing principle; (3) there exists, therefore, a sublime and wise cause of the world; (4) the unity of the cause may be inferred,

by analogy, from the unity of the reciprocal relations between parts of the world. To bring this statement into harmony with the more usual form of the argument from design, McTaggart adds the characteristic of goodness to the arrangements and their cause. He points out that the argument does not hold that all parts of the observable universe are good in themselves, but that some parts, even intrinsically indifferent and intrinsically evil ones, are used as means to divine ends.[69]

b. For God as omnipotent.

McTaggart holds that the argument from design is useless as a proof of the existence of an omnipotent God. He agrees with Kant that it could not prove the existence of a creative God. The reason is that the material of the universe might have been created by one being and arranged by another. McTaggart quotes with approval Kant's statement that "the utmost that could be established by such a proof would be an <u>architect of the world</u>, always very much hampered by the quality of the material with which he has to work, not a <u>creator</u> to whose idea everything is subject."[70] McTaggart also agrees with Kant that there is no reason to hold that the power and wisdom of such an architect would be infinite.

If it was true, holds McTaggart, that a wise and good being used means to ends, it would follow that he was not omnipotent. An omnipotent being could secure

ends without using means. Since the means have no value except with reference to the ends, it would be inconsistent with the wisdom of an omnipotent being to employ them. "Insofar, therefore, as the nature of any fact in the universe suggests that it owes its existence to its utility as means for a divine purpose, it suggests, with just the same force, that the divine designer of the universe is not omnipotent."[71]

It seems to me that this argument would apply only to the use of means that were positively evil. It surely would not be consistent with the wisdom of an omnipotent God to use evil means to any end, for God, being good, could will only good. But if the means was not positively evil, why could not a God employ it if he wished? The use of such a means would be an expression of God's power, not a sign of limitation on it. There is no essential unwisdom in the doing of a thing that is unnecessary. God might find value in the use of apparently valueless means towards more apparently valuable ends.

It is conceivable, according to McTaggart, that a very moderately good being might have designed a world as good as the one that we can observe.[72] The argument from design cannot help us to establish the existence of an omnipotent being who is as good as we would demand that God should be. Furthermore, if it

does prove the existence of an omnipotent being, it positively disproves the hypothesis that he is good.[73] For an omnipotent being to use any intrinsically evil thing as a means to any end is incompatible with that being's possession of the quality of goodness.

c. For God as non-omnipotent.

Turning to McTaggart's discussion of the existence of a non-omnipotent and creative God, we find that he again rejects the argument from design.[74] McTaggart admits that the objections based on the incompatibility of the truth of the argument with the existence of an omnipotent God are not relevant here. But he holds that it is still true, even though a non-omnipotent and creative God might find it necessary to use means to ends, that the universe might have been arranged by a being who did not create it.

McTaggart again considers the argument from design in his treatment of the hypothesis of a non-creative God.[75] His conclusions are intended to apply to either a non-creative God or a non-omnipotent and creative God. His rejection of the consistency of the idea of God as creative leads him to state that the argument, if it were valid, could prove the existence only of a non-creative God.

McTaggart says that if matter or selves mechanically arranged are held to be real, then the suggestion of

the presence of a directing mind arises from the fact that nothing that we know about matter or the selves explains the traces of order that we see.[76] Even so, he holds, it is only a great probability of a directing mind that we have under these hypotheses. He contends that there is a third hypothesis, namely, that reality is a harmonious system of selves, the nature of the system explaining the traces of order and goodness.[77] It is not necessary to seek for the cause of this system. There must be some ultimate unexplainable fact at the basis of every theory. It is no more unreasonable to accept the system of selves as the ultimate fact than it is to accept a God or a single first cause as such. The onus of disproving the theory of a harmonious system of selves rests on the supporters of the argument from design. That argument cannot be conclusive so long as this alternative remains. It is not impossible that both such a system of selves and a directing God might exist, but as long as that system does exist, it is impossible to prove the existence of God by the argument from design.

It is McTaggart's view that if the existence of a director of the universe was proved, that director could not be perfectly good because of the influences on him of other selves that hinder him. His argument is based on the assumption that the personality of God would be so unified that to impair the perfection of any part of his personality would be to make impossible the perfection of

any other part. But I see no reason why God's power could not be limited externally without destroying his moral perfection. Of course, God's material goodness would be impaired, but his formal goodness could remain perfect. Formal goodness can be destroyed only by autonomous volition; if God was hindered by other selves, he would not then be completely autonomous. Formal goodness is essentially more important than material goodness, for only formal goodness will insure the realization of the possible maximum of value. Furthermore, although a supreme being might not always be good, it must be possible for him to be perfectly good at some time in order for him to be good at all. The quality of goodness is absolute wherever it is found. There is no reason why this necessary temporary goodness could not be extended throughout the entire existence of God. If McTaggart's argument is sound, no self can at any time be perfectly good. If no self can at any time be perfectly good, there can be no goodness in the universe. If perfect goodness is found in a self at one time, there is no reason why it could not always be there.

But, this question aside, McTaggart asserts that a director of the universe could be good enough to be called God. He holds, however, that the argument from design could not prove the sufficient goodness of such a being.[79] If it is possible that the director of the universe is

striving towards good ends and cannot help producing evil, then, so far as the argument from design is concerned, it is also possible that the controlling being is striving towards bad ends and cannot help producing good. The argument from design cannot tell us how good or how bad the controlling being is. Therefore it cannot tell us whether that being is God.

McTaggart raises the further objection that if the director of the universe is finite, we cannot be sure that there is only one director.[80] He maintains that many of the facts of experience suggest at least as strongly the existence of several beings working in harmony or possibly partly in harmony and partly in opposition. "It may not be impossible to revert to polytheism, or to conceive God as striving against other persons who equal him in everything but goodness."[81] But if a director of the universe was no more important in power than these others, he hardly could be called God. McTaggart's conclusion is that the existence of God cannot be proved by the argument from design.

4. The argument from necessity for an omniscient being.

McTaggart rejects the argument that the truth of idealism involves the existence of an omniscient being, who could be only God. This argument cannot be used to prove the existence of an omnipotent God, for omniscience

does not imply omnipotence.[82] It cannot be used to prove the existence of a non-omnipotent and creative God, because an omniscient being could know reality that he did not create.[83] Furthermore, the argument cannot prove the existence of any kind of God.[84] It is valid for the school of idealism whose fundamental tenet is summed up in the words esse est percipi. It need not be recognized by idealists who hold that the fundamental truth is that to exist a thing must perceive. To the latter group belongs McTaggart. It seems to me that whether he must recognize the necessity for an omniscient being will depend on whether he is successful in showing that indivvidual selves can be the grounds of their own existences. If a self cannot be the ground of its own existence, then it must exist by virtue of the will of some other being. Such a relation would imply that the being who was the cause would know the other.

5. McTaggart's conclusion on arguments: none conclusive.

It now appears that McTaggart believes that there is no conclusive argument for the existence of God. I believe that his criticisms have been sufficient to show the inadequacy of the arguments discussed above.. His treatment does not give attention to all the arguments for the existence of God, notably the argument from the objectivity of value. It may be that McTaggart would consider

that argument to be a specification of the argument from design. This is, however, mere conjecture. Considering the wide influence of the argument from the objectivity of value, McTaggart is to be criticized for omitting it from his discussion.

D. External criticisms of the idea of God.

McTaggart presents certain external criticisms of the idea of God. He rejects the idea of a creative God on two grounds: (1) the creativity of God would be incompatible with the status of the other selves in the universe as primary parts of reality; (2) creativity would be incompatible with the doctrine of the unreality of time. He rejects the idea of a non-creative God on the ground of the unreality of time.

1. Creative God <u>versus</u> primacy of the selves.

The first objection to the idea of a creative God runs as follows.[85] A creative God would create all selves other than himself. That would make God more fundamental in the universe than all other selves. This cannot be, for all selves are primary parts of the universe, and so are fundamental and ultimate constituents of reality. "It would not, I think, be possible to combine this co-equal primacy of the selves with such predominance of one self as would be involved in creation."[85] In reply to this it may be said that McTaggart's proof of the primacy of the selves has

given them only a descriptive primacy. That is, at any given moment, the selves are the true individuals that can be counted as the constituent parts of all reality. Such primacy of the selves would be compatible with their metaphysical dependence on God for their existence.

2. Creative God and unreality of time.

The objection to the idea of a creative God on the basis of the unreality of time is founded on the assertion that some reference to time is essential to the idea of creation.[87] Creation would be a non-reciprocal relation. God would be the cause and the selves would be the effects. Now, we cannot say that one thing is the cause of another unless it is prior to it in time. "When two terms are timeless or simultaneous, we can only say that they are in a causal relation, without designating either of them as cause."[88] Since time in unreal, creation of the universe by God is impossible.

To discuss thoroughly here the validity of the assumption that time is unreal would require too great a digression. McTaggart's objection may be met more readily by the establishing of the truth of the view that creation does not involve reference to time. McTaggart's statement that reference to time is implied by the idea of creation seems to rest on a misapprehension of what God's creation of the universe means. He seems to assume that it involves

the kind of causal principle that was found, in the discussion of the argument from the necessity for a first cause, to be so unsound.[89] In accordance with that principle, God's existence as the creator of the universe would be a discrete event in a temporal causal series in which the existence of the universe would be a separate and posterior event. The cause of the universe would have to transcend it temporally. All this, however, refers to a metaphysically inadequate type of causation.

By saying that God is the creative cause of the universe we mean that he is the metaphysical ground of its existence. Let us first assume that time is real. On this assumption, God may have existed before the existence of the universe. Prior to the existence of the universe, he was not the cause of the universe. As soon as his volitional activity brought the universe into existence, he became the cause of the universe, the ground of its existence. If at any time he should bring the existence of the universe to an end, he would cease to be the ground of its existence, for it would have none. In other words, God's existence as cause of the universe is co-terminous with the existence of the universe. He is its cause by virtue of his immanent activity in it. The causal relation is not time-transcending, but simultaneous. Now, all this is on the assumption of the reality of time. But if God's causal relation to the

universe on the assumption of the reality of time is essentially one of simultaneity rather than of temporal transcendence, why is that relation of simultaneous existence impossible if time be held to be unreal? If time is unreal, all things exist simultaneously. God as cause of the universe might exist simultaneously with the universe, and it might be only by virtue of God's will that such was the case. On the assumption that God and the universe are timeless, it might be impossible to prove by direct argument that God and the universe were in a non-reciprocal causal relation, but I can see no objection to holding the existence of that relation as an hypothesis. If time is unreal, we are not confronted with the impossibility of the existence of non-reciprocal relations between causes and effects, but only with the empirical difficulty of designating which terms are the causes.

McTaggart considers the suggestion that even though creation must be a temporal relation, it is possible that there should be a God who was in a timeless relation to other substances, and this relation would be so like creation that the result would not be gravely misrepresented by saying that God was the creator of those other substances.[90] This attempted solution, he holds, would be false, for the other selves would have to be co-equal with God, and the causal relation would be reciprocal. This differs from

the ordinary meaning of creation enough to be a serious misrepresentation. Furthermore, since every self in absolute reality desires the existence of everything he knows, an omniscient God would desire the existence of the whole universe. In this, however, there is nothing analogous to creation, for the acquiescence in anything depends on perception of it, and so on its existence. God also acquiesces in his own existence in the same way as he acquiesces in the existence of other selves. A relation that he has to himself could not be analogous to creation. The truth of McTaggart's objections to the above suggestion depends on the validity of the hypothesis that the selves are all ultimate constituents of reality. If that hypothesis is valid, McTaggart's objections are sound. If it is not valid, the causal relation need not, as I have shown above, be reciprocal and hence not comparable to creation.

3. Non-creative God and the unreality of time.

Let us now turn to McTaggart's rejection of the idea of a controlling, though non-creative, God on the basis of the unreality of time.[91] A controlling God would not cause the existence of selves and their parts, but he would be the cause of the occurrence of certain qualities of selves and their parts. Divine control would be, like creation, a non-reciprocal relation. Only in

time could such a relation exist. Therefore, since there is no time, there can be no divine control. Although there may be the appearance of a controlling God, there is no real relation analogous to control. This objection of McTaggart's is subject to the criticism that it falsely assumes that there can be no timeless non-reciprocal relations.

E. Conclusion: McTaggart's critique not final.

McTaggart's critique of the idea of God has now been presented under three headings, namely, the consistency of the idea of God, arguments for the existence of God, and external criticisms of the idea of God. McTaggart has proved that the idea of an omnipotent God is inconsistent. I have shown that his view that the idea of a non-omnipotent and creative God is inconsistent is unsound. That the idea of a non-creative God is consistent has been demonstrated satisfactorily. McTaggart has been justified, on the whole, in his rejection of the arguments for the existence of God that have been discussed. No serious external criticisms of the idea of God have been successfully maintained. Since McTaggart has not been able to prove that the idea of God as non-omnipotent and creative and the idea of God as non-creative are inconsistent, his critique of the idea of God does not constitute a final disproof of that hypothesis. The establishing of the truth of McTaggart's metaphysical system as a whole, however, would involve rejection of any theistic hypothesis.

III. Summary of thesis.

The purpose of this thesis is to present a descriptive and critical study of McTaggart's critique of the idea of God.[92]

McTaggart defines God as "a being who is personal, supreme, and good."[93] This definition is in harmony with contemporary theological and popular usage in the Western world. Acceptance of it serves to clarify discussion of the idea of God.[94]

The consistency of the idea of God is discussed with reference to three hypotheses: God may be (1) omnipotent and creative, (2) non-omnipotent and creative, or (3) non-omnipotent and non-creative.[95]

The idea of God as omnipotent and creative is inconsistent. In the first place, no person could be omnipotent, because all persons must be limited by laws of rational possibility.[96] In the second place, omnipotence would be incompatible with the goodness of God, and God must, by definition, be good.[97] To avoid ambiguity, God ought not to be called omnipotent.[98]

McTaggart holds that the idea of God as non-omnipotent and creative is inconsistent. If God creates evil, he is evil. There can be no external limitations on the power of the creator such as to excuse his creating evil.[99]

The hypothesis of internal limitations is meaningless.[100] It would require a destructive division in the personality of God. McTaggart's conclusion, however, is not valid.[101]

The idea of God as non-omnipotent and non-creative is consistent.[102]

After rejecting certain general arguments for the existence of God, McTaggart goes on to refute the argument from the necessity for a first cause, the argument from design, and the argument from the necessity for an omniscient being.

The argument from the necessity for a first cause is rejected because the existence of a first cause is not necessary an alternative to the existence of an infinite regress of causes.[103] Furthermore, if God exists in time, why should it be said that he needs no previous cause while all other selves or objects do?[104] Whether he exists in time or whether his existence is timeless, the argument makes it necessary to believe that he causes changes while he himself remains unchanging. This is impossible.[105] Finally, the argument could not prove that God was either personal or good.[106]

The argument from design is also rejected. It cannot prove the existence of a creative God, because the

order in the universe might be due to a non-creative director of the universe.[107] An omnipotent God would not use means to ends.[108] If the argument proves the existence of an omnipotent being, it proves that he is not good. God must be good.[109] The argument from design cannot prove the existence of a non-omnipotent God because a harmonious system of selves could be accepted as the fundamental metaphysical fact.[110] Furthermore, there is the theoretical possibility that there might be more than one director of the universe.[111]

The argument from the necessity for an omniscient being is not valid for all schools of idealism.[112]

McTaggart criticizes the idea of a creative God on the ground that the existence of such a God would not be compatible with the primacy of the selves as ultimate constituents of reality.[113] Also, the idea of the creativity of God is incompatible with the doctrine of the unreality of time.[114] Likewise, the idea of the existence of God as non-creative is incompatible with the doctrine of the unreality of time.[115]

Since McTaggart does not establish the inconsistency of the idea of God as non-omnipotent, his rejection of the hypothesis of the existence of God is not a final disproof of the truth of that doctrine.[116]

NOTES

Following is a list of symbols used for some of McTaggart's writings:

Cosmo.....Studies in Hegelian Cosmology.
Dial.....Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic.
Dogmas.....Some Dogmas of Religion.
Exist.....The Nature of Existence.
"Ideal"......"An Ontological Idealism."

All references are to pages unless otherwise specified. References to this thesis will be designated by Thesis, followed by the page-number. For full bibliographical data refer to the bibliography.

1. For a study of McTaggart's philosophy of religion see Leamon, J.H., The Philosophy of Religion of John M.E. McTaggart.

2. Cf. bibliography.

3. Thesis,

4. Cf. "Ideal" and Knudson, A.C., The Philosophy of Personalism.

5. Dogmas, 186; Exist, Vol. II, 176; cf. "Ideal," 262.

6. In Dogmas, 186, McTaggart writes, "the whole sum of existence." In Exist, Vol. II, 176, he writes, "all else that exists." In the first case, God would be able to will profound changes in his own nature. This might make unmeaning the idea of limitations on his power that existed within his own anture. In the second case, God would be able to will profound changes only in external existence; he might have within his nature certain constant limitations on his power.

7. Dogmas, 186; Exist, Vol. II, 176.

8. Ibid.

9. Cosmo, 56-57.

10. That Hegel's Absolute is impersonal is McTaggart's own view. Many disagree with that view. Cf. Miss Calkins' review of Cosmo. His classification of Spinoza's God as impersonal may be due to the fact that both thought and extension are attributes of God, and to the view that a person could not be extended.

11. Cosmo, 56; Exist, Vol. II, 177; Dogmas, 187.

12. Dogmas, 186-187.

13. Exist, Vol. II, foot-note beginning on p. 177.

14. Thesis, 30.

15. McTaggart, Review of G.H. Howison's The Limits of Evolution. Dogmas published 1906; review published 1902.

16. Dogmas, 253-254; Thesis, 47.

17. Dogmas, 187-188.

18. Ibid., 188-189.

19. Ibid., 189.

20. Ibid., 203-204.

21. Ibid., 204-208.

22. This argument is presented in Dogmas, 204-208 (sections 167-170). "To the arguments discussed in sections 167-170, I should now [published 1927] attach even less weight than I did when those sections were first published [1906]." Exist, Vol. II, 178, note beginning on 177.

23. Dogmas, 208-213.

24. Ibid., 202-203.

25. Ibid., 209.

26. Ibid., 209-210.

27. Ibid., 213-216.

28. Ibid., 216.

29. Perhaps McTaggart's thought at this point is influenced by his rejection of the validity of the doctrine of the freedom of the will. Cf. Dogmas, Chap. V; Thesis, 31.

30. Dogmas, 216-217.

31. Ibid., 217. This hypothesis is so briefly stated as not to reveal its full meaning.

32. Dogmas, 218.

33. Pringle-Pattison, A.S., Review of J.M.E. McTaggart's Dogmas, 204.

34. Dogmas, 218-219.

35. Dogmas, 224.

36. Ibid., 225.

37. Ibid., 230.

38. Ibid., 231-232.

39. Ibid., 232.

40. Ibid., 232-233.

41. Dogmas, 233.

42. This position, briefly stated, is substantially that of Prof. E.S. Brightman.

43. Dogmas, 235.

44. Thesis, 15.

45. Dogmas, 189-190, 221, 237; cf. Chap. II.

46. Ibid., 190.

47. Ibid., 190, 221, 237.

48. Ibid., 190-191.

49. Exist, Vol. II, 179, Note 1.

50. Exist, Vol. II, 179, Note 1; Exist, Vol. I, 226-227.

51. "The Meaning of Causality," 330.

52. Dogmas, 192.

53. Thesis, 42; Dogmas, 192-192.

54. Dogmas, 193.

55. Ibid., 194.

56. Ibid..

57. Dogmas, 195.

58. Ibid., 210, note.

59. Ibid., 222.

60. Ibid., 237.

61. Dogmas,238.

62. Ibid., 191.

63. Thesis, 33.

64. Thesis, 36.

65. Thesis, 53-54.

66. Dogmas, 192-193; Thesis, 35.

67. Exist, Vol. II, 179, Note 1.

68. Dogmas, 197. For other statements of the argument see Exist, Vol. II, 184 and Dogmas, 238.

69. Dogmas, 198-199.

70. Ibid., 200.

71. Ibid., 201.

72. Ibid., 200.

73. Ibid., 201.

74. Ibid., 222-223.

75. Ibid., 238-250.

76. Ibid., 248-249.

77. Ibid., 249.

78. Ibid., 253-254.

79. Ibid., 254-257.

80. Ibid., 257-259.

81. Ibid., 258.

82. Ibid., 202.

83. Dogmas, 223.

84. Ibid., 250-253.

85. Exist, Vol. II, 178-179.

86. Ibid., 179. Cf. Cosmo, Chap. II.

87. Exist, Vol. II, 179.

88. Exist, Vol. II, 179.

89. Thesis, 40-42.

90. Exist, Vol. II, 179-180.

91. Ibid., 181-183.

92. Thesis, 1.

93. Ibid., 3.

94. Ibid., 7.

95. Ibid., 9.

96. Ibid., 9-11.

97. Ibid., 12-16.

98. Ibid., 16-17.

99. Ibid., 19.

100. Ibid., 19-24.

101. Ibid., 24-30.

102. Ibid., 30.

103. Ibid., 33.

104. Ibid., 35.

105. Ibid., 36-37.

106. Ibid., 39.

107. Ibid., 44

108. Ibid., 44-45.

109. Thesis, 45-46.

110. Ibid., 46-47.

111. Ibid., 49.

112. Ibid., 49-50.

113. Ibid., 51-52.

114. Ibid., 52-55.

115. Ibid., 55.

116. Ibid., 56.

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